

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 1032

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: GY, UR, PDIP
SUBJECT: PRIMINISTER BURHAM'S MISSION TO MOSCOW

REF: (A) GEORGETOWN 734 (NOTAL), (B) GEORGETOWN 806

1. FOR THE LAST SEVEN MONTHS IT HAS BEEN COMMON KNOWLEDGE
IN GEORGETOWN, THOUGH NOT DISCUSSED IN THE LOCAL MEDIA, THAT
PRIMIN FORBES BURNHAM WAS BEING PRESSED BY THE SOVIETS TO
SET A DATE FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE USSR. RUSSIAN
PERSISTENCE HAS NOW FINALLY PAID OFF. IN THE FIRST
PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT APIRL 5 THE GOG HAS REVEALED THAT
BURNHAM IS EXPECTED TO DEPART, PERHAPS AS EARLY AS
APRIL 11, ON HIS LONG-DELAYED TRIP TO THE SOVIET UNION.
THIS REPRESENTS AN ACCELERATION OF THE RUMORED TIME-
TABLE WHICH HAD HIM LEAVING TOWARD THE END OF APRIL;
OUR INFORMANTS TELL US THAT THE REVISED DEPARTURE DATE
IS AT THE REQUEST OF HIS HOSTS WHO WOULD LIKE HIM IN
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MOSCOW BEFORE MAY 1.

2. AS ORIGINALLY BLOCKED OUT THIS TRIP TO THE SOVIET
UNION WAS TO HAVE INCLUDED PRIOR STOPS IN LONDON,
WARSAW AND BERLIN (IN ADVANCE OF THE MOSCOW STOP) AND
A VISIT TO NORTH KOREA BEFORE BURNHAM RETURNED TO
GEORGETOWN. IT IS NOT AS YET KNOWN WHETHER THE REST

OF THE SCHEDULE HAS BEEN ALTERED BY THE RUSSIAN DESIRE FOR AN EARLIER ARRIVAL. (BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER INFORMED AMBASSADOR AT LUNCH APRIL 5 THAT HE HAS BEEN KEPT COMPLETELY IN THE DARK BY THE GOG REGARDING BURNHAM'S TRAVEL PLANS. HIS QUERIES HAVE BEEN MET WITH THE REPLY THAT ARRANGEMENTS WERE BEING HANDLED "THROUGH LONDON.")

3. ASSUMING THAT NOTHING NOW INTERFERES WITH BURNHAM'S TRAVEL PLANS, HE WILL BE LEAVING GEORGETOWN AT AN INTERESTING MOMENT. THE ECONOMY IS IN SERIOUS DIFFICULTY AND GIVES EVERY EVIDENCE OF GRINDING TO A HALT. QUEUES ARE EVERYWHERE AS THE CITIZENS OF GUYANA LINE UP FOR EVERYDAY COMMODITIES SUCH AS SOAP, CIGARETTES, DETERGENTS, TOOTH PASTE, AND THE LIKE WHICH HAVE BECOME RARITIES ON THE MARKET. SERIOUS MAINTENANCE PROBLEMS HAVE BESET THE AGING HEAT-POWER PLANT WHICH SERVES THE CAPITAL AND PROLONGED UNANNOUNCED BLACKOUTS HAVE BECOME THE ORDER OF THE DAY (AND NIGHT). AS A PRELUDE TO THE INTRODUCTION OF A NEW CONSTITUTION WHICH WILL PERMIT THE GOVERNMENT TO FINESSE THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS REQUIRED WITHIN MONTHS BY THE OLD ONE, A BILL HAS JUST BEEN INTRODUCED IN THE PARLIAMENT WHICH, IF ADOPTED, WILL RESULT IN THE SCHEDULING OF NATIONAL REFERENDUM IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WILL SEE CARTE BLANCHE AUTHORITY TO BRING ABOUT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE BY SIMPLE PARLIAMENTARY ACTION. HOW EASILY BURNHAM AND HIS RULING PEOPLE'S

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NATIONAL CONGRESS (PNC) GET AWAY WITH THIS PLOY, DEPENDS TO A CERTAIN EXTENT ON THE REACTION OF HIS ANCIENT POLITICAL FOE, CHEDDI JAGAN, LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION PPP. RUMORS PERSIST THAT BURNHAM HAS ALREADY SENT A COPY OF THE NEW DRAFT CONSTITUTIONS WHICH HIS MINIONS HAVE BEEN LABORED OVER TO THE RUSSIANS IN HOPES THAT THEY CAN PERSUADE THEIR MAN JAGAN TO CONCUR IN IT IN ANTICIPATION THAT IT WILL SERVE AS THE VEHICLE FOR THE COMING INTO BEING OF A PNC/PPP GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION IN GEORGETOWN. SUCH A GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN JAGAN'S SINGLE GOAL FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS. IF JAGAN AND THE RUSSIANS RISE TO THE BAIT, THE PUNDITS SAY THAT BURNHAM WILL EITHER RENEGE ON THE DEAL WHEN HE HAS HIS NEW CONSTITUTION OR AGREE TO SOME COSMETIC UNION WITH JAGAN IN THE BELIEF THAT HE CAN ONCE MORE OUT-MANEUVER HIS MARXIST RIVAL AS HE HAS SO OFTEN IN THE PAST.

4. RUSSIAN AID IS A SECONDARY GOAL OF BURNHAM'S MOSCOW MISSION. DESPITE GENEROUS HELP FROM THE UK, CANADA, THE IDB AND THE U.S., THE ECONOMY, AS INDICATED ABOVE, IS IN FEARFUL SHAPE. SUBSTANTIAL AID FROM ANY NEW QUARTER WOULD BE A GODSEND AND THOUGH BURNHAM, ON THE

BASIS OF PAST EXPERIENCE, PROBABLY REALIZES THAT THE
TIGHT-FISTED RUSSIANS ARE UNLIKELY TO PROVIDE HIM AND
HIS GOVERNMENT WITH ANY IMPORTANT SUMS, HE WILL
UNDOUBTEDLY BE GRATEFUL FOR ANYTHING THEY MIGHT CHOOSE
TO GIVE HIM.
BURKE

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